

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

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### **REP. VERN TINCHER'S STATEHOUSE REPORT**

INDIANAPOLIS – It has been an active week at the Statehouse, with debate and votes on a number of crucial issues that have garnered a good deal of public attention.

Entering the final month of the 2005 session, we are moving toward several deadlines for action. By April 4, we must have completed House committee work on bills sent to us from the Indiana Senate. With more than 220 Senate bills up for consideration, we are starting to see both committee meetings and floor sessions that are stretching into the evening hours.

Certainly the most extensive debate on the House floor was on the controversial proposal to require all people to provide a photo ID in order to vote. Representatives discussed Senate Bill 18 for more than three hours before passing the measure on a party-line vote.

I opposed this legislation, because it provides a solution to a problem that does not exist. Throughout the weeks of debate on this issue, supporters have not provided a single example where electoral fraud has taken place at a polling site. The problems that have occurred have been caused by absentee ballots, which are not addressed in Senate Bill 18.

House Democrats offered several amendments that could have provided electoral reform in the right area. We would have required any person who does not have a photo ID to sign an affidavit that swears the voter's name and address are correct. The same requirement would be made for any person who fills out an absentee ballot at a local clerk's office. The penalties for lying on this affidavit would have been a fine of \$10,000 and 18 months in prison.

However, these amendments were defeated by the House majority, which preferred a plan that will actively keep older Hoosiers, minorities and people on lower incomes from voting.

I support clean, honest and open elections, but I also want to make sure that everyone who can vote is able to vote and have their ballots counted. I fear that Senate Bill 18 will place a huge barrier in front of that goal.

Receiving bipartisan support was Senate Bill 444, which marks the latest step in legislative efforts to stop the spread of meth across Indiana. In recent years, lawmakers have passed a series of initiatives designed to curb the production and use of this highly addictive drug, including tougher penalties and educational initiatives to help track purchases of the chemicals used to make meth.

Senate Bill 444 focuses on ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, two items found in many cold medicines that are necessary to make meth. Under this bill, both will be classified as Schedule V controlled substances, which means that products with these ingredients could only be sold at a pharmacy and distributed by a licensed pharmacist.

One of the problems in dealing with meth is that the drug is easy to produce because it uses many substances that can be found around the house, and it can be made practically anywhere, including homes and vehicles. Senate Bill 444 expands the list of identified chemical reagents (also known as precursors) that are used to manufacture meth, a change that reflects the growing number of substances that can be used to make the drug.

The bill also calls for creation of a data base cataloguing all meth labs that have been seized. Local fire and public health departments will be notified of these locations in order to be aware of potential health risks.

Medical experts say that highs from meth last 10 times longer than those caused by cocaine, and users often

demonstrate violent behavior, hallucinations and convulsions. Since the drug is produced using many volatile chemicals, there is a great risk that there will be explosions, fires and environmental contamination.

Meth is a problem that requires constant vigilance, and I hope that measures like Senate Bill 444 will help us address the problem at its core and help us rid ourselves of this evil drug.

House members also approved Senate Joint Resolution 7, which creates a constitutional ban on same-sex marriages in Indiana. This measure must be submitted again for consideration by the Legislature in either 2007 or 2008, then be approved by Indiana voters in a statewide referendum before becoming law.

Remember that Indiana already has what is generally acknowledged as one of the toughest state laws banning same sex marriages. IC 31-11-1-1(a) specifies that marriage in Indiana can only be between a man and a woman. The law was upheld by the Indiana Court of Appeals in January.

Finally, representatives approved Senate Bill 1, which provides a series of tax incentives for businesses, including tax credits to help businesses that relocate corporate headquarters to Indiana and extensions of benefits like tax abatements and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts.

While I support efforts to improve economic development in our state, please remember that these incentives increase the property tax bills for homeowners across Indiana. House Democrats attempted to provide property tax relief for homeowners and farmers through an amendment to increase the homestead deduction from \$35,000 to \$42,000 and creation of a farmstead deduction, but these proposals were rejected by the House majority.

It is disappointing that we were unable to assist homeowners and farmers, particularly when you consider that the House Republican budget proposes a freeze on the Property Tax Replacement Credit (PTRC), which means that it is likely that local property taxes will go up.

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